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**1975/03/17**

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EYES ONLY VIA MARTIN CHANNEL

SAIGON 0673 IMMEDIATE

DELIVER 008

MARCH 17, 1975

TO: GENERAL BRENT SNOWCROFT

FROM: CHARGE LEHMANN

EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR MARTIN

1. I HOPE THAT FROM THE NUMEROUS REPORTS WHICH HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED TO WASHINGTON THROUGH VARIOUS MISSION REPORTING CHANNELS IN THE COURSE OF LAST WEEK IT WILL HAVE BECOME EVIDENT THAT THE CURRENT NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE HAS TRANSFORMED THE POST JANUARY 1973 CONFLICT INTO A FULL-SCALE CONVENTIONAL WAR. ON THE COMMUNIST SIDE THAT WAR IS BEING WAGED BY A FORCE INSIDE SOUTH VIETNAM CONSISTING OF NO LESS THAN 20 NORTH VIETNAMESE MAIN FORCE DIVISIONS (10 INFANTRY, 1 ARTILLERY, 3 AIR DEFENSES, 1 SAPPER), 4 BRIGADE SIZE UNITS OR SEPARATE REGIMENTS AND SOME NON-DIVISIONAL SUPPORTING UNITS. THE ENTIRE FORCE BEING BACKED BY THE LOGISTICS, TRAINING AND REPLACEMENT BASE IN NORTH VIETNAM. AS OF THIS TIME ELEMENTS OF TWO OF NORTH VIETNAM'S SEVEN STRATEGIC RESERVE DIVISION AND ONE DIVISION FROM LAOS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO THE CONFLICT AND OTHERS ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW.

2. AS I READ IT PRESIDENT THIEN AND OTHERS IN THE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZE THAT THEY ARE FACED WITH A SERIOUS SITUATION, QUITE POSSIBLY CALLING FOR SOME VERY BASIC FAR REACHING DECISIONS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DECIDED TO ABANDON KONTUM AND PLEIKU PROVINCES. A SIMILAR DECISION TO DROP THE AN LOC ENCLAVE BUT TRY TO EXTRICATE THE TROOPS THERE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN MADE BUT WE ARE NOT YET SURE. HOWEVER, THIS SEEMS TO BE ONLY THE BEGINNING. WE HAVE GROWING INDICATIONS THAT SERIOUS THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO DRAMATIC POLICY REVISIONS WHICH WOULD CALL FOR ABANDONING MAJOR PORTIONS OF THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO ENABLE A TRULY WORKABLE DEFENSE OF THE REMAINDER. WE KNOW THAT DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HAO (WHO IS, OF COURSE, A SOUTHERNER FROM THE DELTA) HAS ARGUED STRONGLY THAT RESOURCES AT HAND ARE INSUFFICIENT TO DEFEND THE ENTIRE PRESENT TERRITORY OF THE RVN. HAO PROPOSES TO ABANDON MR-1 AND MAJOR PORTIONS OF MR-2. WE ALSO KNOW THAT KHIEM IS BEGINNING TO THINK ALONG SIMILAR LINES.

\*\*\*\*\* WHSR COMMENT \*\*\*\*\*

SCOWCROFT, MCFARLANE, RODMAN

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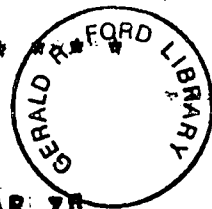
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E.O. 12958 Sec. 3.6

Same as MR 93-37, # 13

Subj. to, 11/5/13

By 661 NARA Date 3/1/2000



WE ARE TRYING TO GET MORE ON A REPORT THAT A NUMBER OF YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS ARE URGING SUCH A COURSE ON THE PRESIDENT. GENERAL TRUONG IN MR64 WHO IS LOSING THE AIRBORNE DIVISION TO MR65 WHICH WILL BE ONLY PARTIALLY REPLACED BY NEW RECENTLY FORMED MARINE UNITS IS CONTEMPLATING THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF PORTIONS OF MR64 IN ORDER TO CONCENTRATE ON THE DEFENSE OF DANANG AND HUE.

3. APART FROM THE VERY STRONG NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY POSITION ONE OF THE ARGUMENTS BEING MADE IN SUPPORT OF A DECISION FOR MAJOR TERRITORIAL RETRENCHMENT IS THAT DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT FORD, THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE, AND YOURSELF, THE AMERICANS CANNOT BE COUNTED UPON. MAO, FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS ARGUMENT CITES THE MOST RECENT ACTION OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE IN SEVERELY REDUCING THE FY75 IPR APPROPRIATION SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW THE AUTHORIZATION LEVEL.

4. OUR INDICATORS THAT TOP LEVEL VIETNAMESE THINKING IS DEVELOPING ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED ABOVE ARE ADMITTEDLY FRAGMENTARY. WE HAVE NO FIRM INDICATION YET OF ANYTHING REGARDING THE PRESIDENT'S OWN THOUGHTS OTHER THAN THE DECISION MADE BY HIM AND GENERAL PHU LAST FRIDAY TO GIVE UP MAJOR PORTIONS OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF MAJOR RVNAF UNITS AND HAVE THEM AVAILABLE FOR THE DEFENSE OF MORE IMPORTANT AREAS OF THE COUNTRY AND FOR THE JOB OF DESTROYING ENEMY UNITS. HOWEVER, I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD BE APPRISED IMMEDIATELY OF THE FOREGOING SINCE INDICATIONS OF THIS TRAIN OF THINKING MAY SOON SHOW UP MORE CONCRETELY IN OUR INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER REPORTS.

XXHH

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